



## What is spinal cord injury?

**The majority of spinal cord injuries happen to young men age 15-24.**

**The most common cause of spinal cord injury is transport related accidents followed by fall related incidents, and then sports related incidents.**

- A spinal cord injury is when the cord is severed, bruised or crushed. This can happen because of trauma such as being in a car accident. Once this happens, messages cannot get between the brain and the body.
- Injuries are different for every person because of the level of injury and if the injury is complete or incomplete. Complete spinal cord injury equals complete paralysis – no movement or feeling below the level of injury. Incomplete spinal cord injury however, can mean some feeling or movement below the level of injury.
- The level of injury is the place on the spinal cord that is severed, bruised or crushed. If it is in someone's neck, it is called "quadriplegia" or "tetraplegia" and this will affect their lower body.
- If the injury is to the person's back, it is called "paraplegia". This means they still have full use of their arms but their lower body will be affected.
- An injury can occur anywhere in the back or neck and the higher the injury, the more parts of the body that will be impacted.
- Sometimes the spinal cord is damaged but not the whole way through. This means some messages can still travel between your brain and your body below the level of injury. Because of the damage to the spinal cord, these messages can be different to before and often people with an incomplete injury feel unexplained pain.
- Once you have a spinal cord injury, it cannot be fixed or repaired.

**There are 350-400 new cases of SCI in Australia every year.**

Disclaimer: This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.



[www.mindyourback.com.au](http://www.mindyourback.com.au)